

THE NATION
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(EXCERPTED)

The FBI Overseas

Meanwhile, the Director fought to retain and expand jurisdiction over intelligence. To begin with, the bureau's domestic counterintelligence jurisdiction rests on a foundation every bit as infirm as its intelligence mandate. During World War II Hoover acquired a foreign assignment (Latin America) which was implemented by a bureau unit, Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). In the fall of 1944 Gen. William J. Donovan submitted a secret memorandum proposing a permanent American foreign

intelligence service based on the OSS and reporting directly to the President. This memorandum became the center of a political storm when it was leaked to the press by the Director. The *Chicago Tribune*, one of Hoover's favorite press outlets, acquired a copy of the top-secret document and printed a series of articles by Hoover's ally, Walter Trohan, denouncing Donovan's plan as a "superspy system." This maneuver succeeded in killing the proposal only temporarily but Hoover continued to fight incursions on his jurisdiction in Latin America for as long as he could. According to a recent account, when the transition came, "in some American embassies south of the border, FBI men destroyed their intelligence files rather than bequeath them to their CIA rivals. The first years of CIA's existence also saw Hoover busily promoting charges that a sinister Communist spy network had subverted OSS."

But these rebuffs never discouraged Hoover's campaign to expand his intelligence empire. Initially a small corps of agents operated through foreign embassies as "legal attachés" and concentrated on law enforcement—principally the apprehension of fugitives. In 1970 Hoover demanded and received authorization to put the FBI in more than twenty-five foreign capitals. In addition to their formal assignment to apprehend fugitives, they were authorized to collect intelligence and to transmit reports back to Hoover for the ultimate use of the White House.

In 1971 Hoover proposed expanding his network into another dozen capitals. President Nixon agreed, despite the fact that the post-World War II Delimitations Agreement of government agencies involved in intelligence work forbade the step. This enlarged network, strongly opposed by both the State Department and the CIA, was wholly intelligence-oriented and transmitted reports in

code which Hoover routed directly to the White House without coordinating with either the CIA or the State Department. According to insiders, the intelligence that was sent was worthless, but Hoover was eager to expand the bureau's foreign intelligence jurisdiction, and at the same time curry favor with the Administration by ascribing domestic unrest to a foreign-based plot, and to upstage the CIA with which the FBI had ended its liaison in May of 1970.

One can only wonder what dreams of power, what drives for dominance, and what fears of rival authority led the aged Director (then 76) to claim a grossly exaggerated importance in the foreign intelligence field and then seek to usurp the operational jurisdiction of other agencies by expanding his already useless and unproductive network of agents abroad.